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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

13 February 1951

SUBJECT: NIE-29: YUGOSLAVIA

THE PROBLEM

To assess the capabilities and intentions of the USSR and its European Satellites with respect to action against Yugoslavia during 1951.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Kremlin aims to eliminate the Tito Government, to replace it by a regime subservient to the USSR, and to integrate Yugoslavia politically, economically, and strategically into the European Satellite structure.

2. Tito's regime will not be overthrown during 1951 by internal revolts, or by subversive activities, no matter how much such activities may be supported from across the border. Overt, armed invasion will be required if the Soviet objective is to be accomplished.

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3. The Yugoslav armed forces would now be capable of resisting full-scale invasion by the armed forces of the USSR for about one month if the defense were withdrawn and concentrated in the mountainous area of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro. If not so concentrated, resistance by regular military forces would probably end within two weeks.

4. Against invasion by the armies of the four neighboring Satellite powers (Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and Albania), organized Yugoslav resistance could be expected to continue for about three months, but probably no more than four months under the most favorable defensive conditions. In either case, guerrilla-type resistance would continue after the collapse of organized resistance.

5. If substantial Western military assistance, in the form of weapons and equipment which could be readily integrated into Yugoslav units, were furnished several months before a Soviet bloc invasion, the period of Yugoslav resistance to a Soviet invasion would be considerably lengthened, the invasion would be more costly to the attacking forces, and Yugoslav defensive capabilities could permit a successful defense against a Satellite invasion.

6. Indications of recent military build-up in the Satellite countries (stockpiling, re-equipment, gasoline conservation,

stepping-up of war industry, etc.) all point to a great and recent increase in Satellite capabilities for military action. Although the Satellites now have the capability for an attack against Yugoslavia during 1951, and such a possibility cannot be overlooked, recent indications neither prove nor disprove an intention to launch such an attack.

7. There is no reason to believe that the USSR, solely to attain its objective of overthrowing Tito, would run grave risks of precipitating World War III. Soviet leaders can hardly fail to estimate that a Soviet or Satellite invasion of Yugoslavia in strength would involve grave risks of war.

8. If the Kremlin for other reasons decides to accept grave risks of general war during 1951, or to precipitate such a war, it might well begin by attacking Yugoslavia.

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DISCUSSION

SOVIET OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO YUGOSLAVIA

1. The Kremlin aims to eliminate the Tito Government, to replace it by a regime subservient to the USSR, and to integrate Yugoslavia politically, economically, and strategically into the European Satellite structure.

STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF TITO'S REGIME

2. The Tito regime is stable. Internal security forces are large and efficient, and have dealt successfully with active opposition elements. Efforts of the Cominform to penetrate and undermine the regime by subversive means have thus far conspicuously failed. Available evidence reveals no effective, organized opposition groups operating within the country and no serious personal rivals to Tito himself.

3. Not only is the machinery of control thus undeniably effective, but the regime also enjoys considerable popular support. A majority of the Yugoslav population prefers it to the reestablishment of control by agents of the USSR. Tito's bold and successful stand in the face of mounting Soviet and Satellite pressure has appealed strongly to Yugoslav national pride. Even the long-standing national minority problems in

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the country are at a low point of intensity. The improvement of Yugoslav relations with the Western Powers, and particularly with the US, has met favorable popular response. Relaxation of the program of agricultural collectivization, political controls, and the campaign against religion have also reduced tendencies toward popular dissatisfaction.

4. Since his break with Moscow, Tito has faced severe economic problems, arising partly from the embargo which the Soviet orbit placed upon all trade with Yugoslavia, and more recently from crop failures within the country. Tito has been fairly successful in reorienting Yugoslav trade westward, and the assistance of Western countries has eliminated the worst danger of the food shortage. Economic difficulties are not likely to cause any serious internal disorders.

5. There are, on the other hand, various weaknesses in the regime, some of which can be exploited by the USSR and its Satellites. Tito's break with the Cominform and his ensuing vigorous campaign against Cominform sympathizers in the Party hierarchy put severe strains upon the mechanisms of totalitarian control. A few of Tito's supporters, though seemingly loyal, may in fact be biding their time until an opportunity occurs for them to improve their fortunes at the expense of their leader. Moreover, the scars of the Communist revolution

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after World War II have not healed. Nationalization of the economy, campaigns against religion, and the development of police state techniques were bitterly resented. Probably the majority of Yugoslavs are anti-Communist, even though they are pro-Tito under present circumstances.

6. Tito's freedom of action in dealing with various political problems is somewhat restricted by his ambivalent ideological position. Any considerable retreat from Communist theory or practice, and any conspicuous associations with the Western Powers, give substance to the Kremlin's contention that Tito is a traitor to Communism; if such developments were to go far enough, they might cost Tito the support of some of his more zealous Marxist followers, who are indispensable functionaries in his totalitarian regime. On the other hand, if he adheres too faithfully to Communist dogma, he alienates the Western Powers, and antagonizes non-Communist elements within Yugoslavia whose support is fundamental if national independence is to be maintained.

7. We believe that Tito's regime will continue to be strong enough to deal with all its internal difficulties, despite strenuous Soviet and Satellite efforts to exploit them. Even in the event of invasion, the great majority of the Yugoslavs would support Tito, and would faithfully carry out what resistance was militarily possible.

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MILITARY VULNERABILITY

8. Most of the peripheral areas along Yugoslavia's extended frontiers are highly vulnerable to Satellite invasion. Northwestern Yugoslavia, including Slovenia and northern Croatia, could be quickly cut off from the rest of the country by a drive southward from Hungary through Zagreb and toward Fiume. The country north of the Sava River between Zagreb and the Danube could also be easily invaded at a number of points along the Hungarian frontier. The Danubian Plain north of Belgrade is especially vulnerable to armored attacks from either Hungary or Rumania. The Belgrade area, although partially protected on the north by the Danube, would be hard to defend against attacks across the Danubian Plain or from the south through the Morava River valley. Yugoslav Macedonia could be cut off by attacks from Bulgaria and Albania directed toward Skoplje.

9. The large mountainous area which includes Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro is suitable for the organization and maintenance of a strong defense. However, this area would be dependent for outside supplies on several moderately good Adriatic Sea ports, access to which could be threatened by Albanian air and naval bases on the eastern shore of the Straits of Otranto. The mountainous defensive area would also be vulnerable to enemy penetrations from the directions of Zagreb and Fiume if such penetrations were undertaken before the organization

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of defensive positions. Several points along the Dalmatian coast might be vulnerable to amphibious attacks launched from Albanian bases.

10. The Yugoslav munitions industry could not meet the country's wartime requirements except in the production of light infantry weapons and small-arms ammunition. Most munitions production is centered around Belgrade and would be vulnerable to ground and air attack in the early stages of hostilities. The main ports of entry and transportation routes through which supplies from abroad might be obtained also are highly vulnerable. Rail and motor routes from Trieste and Fiume would, in the event of an attack from Hungary, probably be cut off at an early stage. Road and rail routes from Salonika are vulnerable to ground attack from Bulgaria and Albania. The only transportation facilities likely to remain in operation during extended hostilities are the ports, roads, and railways along the Dalmatian coast. Even these are of limited capacity and are vulnerable to air attack.

MEASURES SHORT OF WAR LIKELY TO BE APPLIED AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA

11. Since the break between Tito and the Kremlin, an economic blockade has been maintained by the Soviet orbit countries against Yugoslavia. Diplomatic relations have also been virtually

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suspended and Yugoslav diplomats have been harassed and intimidated by Cominform agents. Tito has been portrayed as a life-long "Fascist agent" and a willing tool of Western imperialists in a conspiracy to attack the Soviet Union. The resulting economic and diplomatic isolation of Yugoslavia was for a time extremely dangerous to Tito's regime; if the support of his former Eastern associates had not been replaced in part by support from the Western Powers, Tito might have collapsed. This danger now seems to be over.

12. Attempts will undoubtedly be continued to weaken Tito's regime by the infiltration of saboteurs and subversive agents. It is impossible to estimate how many such agents may cross the frontiers. Although the Yugoslavs are not easily frightened, Moscow may also have some slight success in spreading the fear of war and invasion among those parts of the Yugoslav population who dwell close to the vulnerable frontiers. The USSR can also attempt to stage violent internal uprisings in Yugoslavia, linked with guerrilla raids from the neighboring Cominform countries. It can sponsor attempts to assassinate Tito. It can nourish any elements of Tito's own party with Cominform tendencies who may hope for an opportunity to succeed to power.

13. We believe that none of the methods short of war which the Kremlin may use will substantially weaken Tito's regime, and

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certainly will not overthrow it. Over a period of some three years the Kremlin has already applied to Yugoslavia the strongest economic, political, and psychological pressures of which it is capable. Tito has not been appreciably weakened by them; indeed his successful stand has apparently strengthened his position with the Yugoslav people. He is thoroughly conversant with the tricks and techniques which may be used against him. The period of his greatest vulnerability to such methods is past. It will now require armed invasion to shake his regime.

SOVIET AND SATELLITE ARMED FORCES AVAILABLE FOR AN ATTACK  
ON YUGOSLAVIA

14. Soviet forces presently disposed in countries adjacent to Yugoslavia consist of six line divisions--two each in Austria, Hungary, and Rumania--and are insufficient by themselves for a successful invasion of Yugoslavia. Additional forces could, however, readily be drawn from the USSR to make up an adequate force for an invasion.

15. The armies of Albania, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria now total approximately 440,000 men, but, with partial mobilization over a period of at least 30 days, could be increased to 925,000 men organized in 47 line divisions, 11 combat brigades, and supporting independent regiments. Additional equipment would be required, but this could readily be supplied

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by the USSR by the end of April 1951. Satellite air forces total approximately 900 combat aircraft; their combat effectiveness is low. Satellite naval forces are negligible.

16. The fighting qualities of these forces would be at least good in comparison with Yugoslav forces, particularly in successful offensive operations. Bulgarian and Rumanian forces, are the best trained and equipped of the four Satellite armies, but all Satellite forces would have the major advantage of extensive and timely Soviet logistical support for an invasion of Yugoslavia.

YUGOSLAV FORCES AVAILABLE FOR DEFENSE

17. The Yugoslav Army has a current strength of approximately 275,000 men and could be expanded in 30 days to 600,000 men organized in 40 divisions. Yugoslavia has a further mobilization potential up to 1,000,000 men six months after commencing mobilization, but current and future availability of weapons would restrict arms for additional units to light infantry weapons and some field artillery. Yugoslav weapons are generally of good quality but heterogeneous, with Soviet and German World War II models predominating. The outstanding weaknesses in equipment are in tanks, anti-tank weapons and anti-aircraft artillery. Yugoslav effectiveness would decline rapidly in the event of hostilities because of inability to replace material lost in combat.

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The Yugoslav air force totals approximately 650 planes, but is hampered by a shortage of spare parts. The Yugoslav navy is small and inefficient but is nevertheless capable of successfully opposing any Satellite naval operation.

18. Yugoslav forces are capable of good combat performance, particularly if committed to the defense of the mountainous area of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Montenegro rather than the Danubian plain. Many of the officers and non-commissioned officers had combat experience in World War II and since then have had fairly good training.

19. Under present circumstances, only limited improvement can be expected in Yugoslav capabilities during 1951. The Yugoslavs are currently attempting to purchase arms and equipment from foreign sources, and some material, such as small arms and light artillery, is being manufactured locally. Production is slow, however, and it will be some time before new equipment can be produced in significant quantities. Western military assistance in the form of weapons and equipment which could readily be integrated into Yugoslav units would materially strengthen Yugoslav defensive capabilities if the program were commenced several months before an invasion. Combat capabilities could be further increased by the acquisition of certain items of equipment, such as anti-tank weapons and rocket launchers from the West, but only after Yugoslav personnel had been trained in their use. Major

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assistance would be required to bring the Yugoslav air force to equality with the combined air forces of neighboring Satellites.

SOVIET AND SATELLITE MILITARY CAPABILITIES AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA

20. Soviet armed forces could successfully invade Yugoslavia, overcome organized resistance, and eventually bring guerrilla opposition under control. Under present circumstances, it is estimated that organized Yugoslav resistance could be destroyed within one month. The elimination of guerrilla opposition would take considerably longer and would depend on the extent of outside aid to the guerrillas and the scale of the Soviet effort. Timely Western aid could considerably lengthen the period of resistance to a Soviet invasion and, at the same time, make such an invasion more costly to the USSR.

21. Under present circumstances, the Yugoslav armed forces are incapable of successfully opposing an invasion by the combined forces of Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, and Albania. It is estimated that organized resistance against this force would continue for about three months and probably no more than four months under the most favorable defensive conditions. Guerrilla resistance would, of course, continue beyond that period. Substantial Western military assistance, if commenced several months prior to an invasion, could enable Yugoslavia to defend itself successfully against a combined Satellite invasion.

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PROBABILITY OF SOVIET OR SATELLITE ATTACK ON YUGOSLAVIA  
DURING 1951

22. Indications from all the Satellite countries bordering Yugoslavia point unmistakably to a considerable military build-up. The numbers of the armed forces have been increased; various items of heavy Soviet-made equipment have recently been observed in the possession of Satellite forces; stockpiling of food and materials is taking place; rationing of gasoline and electricity has been introduced into most of the countries; emergency programs for industrial war production have been instituted; and the movement of foreign diplomatic personnel has been more strictly confined. The USSR has meanwhile laid the propaganda groundwork to justify an attack on Tito. These and over indications definitely establish that in 1951 the Satellites are or will be better prepared for an attack on Yugoslavia than they were in 1950; they do not prove that the Satellites will in fact make such an attack. The capability for a successful attack exists, however, and its possibility cannot be overlooked.

23. In assessing the probability of a Soviet-Satellite attack, the considerations presented above demonstrated that no small-scale or surreptitious operation could overthrow Tito's regime; there must be full-scale invasion, by all the Satellite armies, or by some of them with the overt assistance of Soviet armed forces. Indeed, if Tito receives sufficient military

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equipment from the West, he can probably stand off any attack in which the USSR does not openly join. Moreover, a Soviet decision to invade Yugoslavia involves the acceptance by the Kremlin of extreme risks of US intervention and perhaps of World War III. We do not believe that the Kremlin is willing to accept this risk for the sole purpose of attaining its objectives against Tito.

24. If, however, Moscow intends during 1951 to accept grave risks of World War III in pursuit of its general policy, or to precipitate such a war, there are some good reasons for starting the action in Yugoslavia. As the first step in a general European war, the Soviets might feel impelled to eliminate the potential flanking threat presented by a hostile Yugoslavia. By doing so they would also give themselves an improved strategic position for further action against Greece and in general against the Mediterranean region.

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